



AN INTERPROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE WITH MOBILE HOSPICE MBARARA



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LOCATION: MBARARA, UGANDA

Mbarara is a city located in Western Uganda. The population was about 84,000 in 2014. Mbarara is the second largest city in Uganda after the capital city Kampala. There are many languages spoken in Mbarara but most of the people in this region of the country speak Ruyankole. The major religions in this region are Christianity, Islam and traditional religions. Many of the people in this region are engaged in agriculture with the major cash crop being the banana.



Interprofessional Collaboration in Uganda

The model of team collaboration looks much different at MHM than in many health centers in the U.S. Mobile Hospice is highly nurse driven and has a strong culture of community. An example of this is seen in how every member of the team, which includes the non-clinical staff, meet together in the morning for a morning prayer and hymn. They also all meet for morning tea and a snack and mid-day lunch. One can witness and feel the sense of community because they all eat, drink and pray together regardless of their level or status within the organization. Additionally, each member of the team is equally valued for the role that they play in helping the organization to operate smoothly. Everyone is considered a valuable member of the team from the nurse to the cook. We have not yet reached this level of community in our health care teams in the U.S. In the U.S. there is a clear hierarchy within most healthcare organizations and in most cases some members of the health care team are not as valued as others.

GLOBAL FIELD AGENCY

Hospice Africa – Uganda was started in Mbarara in 1995. Mobile Hospice Mbarara provides palliative care to patients through four main avenues. They have clinic on-site that is run every day of the week. They also attend most of the wards of the hospital, they have home visits almost everyday. The hospital that the MHM staff provide care at is Mbarara District Regional Referral Hospital, which is part of MUST University. The wards they attend in the hospital other than the oncology ward include outpatient, gynecology, oncology, general male and female inpatient, pediatrics, among others. However, the hospital itself lacks a comprehensive palliative care treatment program and in-patient unit that is available on-site at other hospitals throughout the country. Therefore, MHM plays a critical role as a third-party provider in giving palliative care to patients in need. In most cases, these patients at the hospital are most commonly self-referred or referred by a physician in some cases and MHM will then seek out the patient in the hospital to follow up on the referral.

OUTCOMES

During my 3-weeks spent in Western Uganda I was able to engage with various community members including the nurses, doctors, social workers, and clinical officers at Mobile Hospice and at Mbarara Regional Hospital. The students and faculty at Mbarara University of Health and Science and the patients and their families.

My accomplishments include:

- Research on best practices for social workers working in Hospice and Palliative Care in Uganda
- Research on best practices for breaking bad news to patients and families
- Developing and presenting a case study with an interdisciplinary view point of a patient experience with Mobile Hospice Mbarara
- Collaborating with an interprofessional group of UoM students and faculty (nursing, social work, medicine, and pharmacy) with the interprofessional team in Uganda

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CONNECTIONS

Classroom

SW 617: Death, Loss and Grief

This course deepens students understanding of the nature of loss and the process of grief and mourning. This course also takes into consideration cultural context and highlights how different cultures and different groups of people view and understand death, dying and mourning. This course has been helpful in helping me process what I experienced working with patients in Uganda and being a part of the hospice team.

SW 504: Social Justice and Diversity in Social Work

This course helped me to explore my experience with privilege and oppression. It deepened my understanding of my own privileged identities and taught me to use self-reflection as a tool to measure the way in which my identities may impact the work I do with clients. This knowledge really helped me to consider these things in a global context while working in a low-resource setting.

Career

Working at Mobile Hospice Mbarara opened my eyes to the field of Hospice and Palliative care and the great work that's being done and the value that this work adds to the lives of the patients and families that are being served. I plan on working with the aging population. This experience has peaked my interest in working with aging clients that are near the end of their lives.

SKILLS DEVELOPED

From this global experience, I gained the following skills:

- The ability to understand the role and need for medical social workers in a global context
- Increased my ability to engage in interprofessional collaboration and team decision making
- Increased my leadership and communication skills by giving social work a voice in the interprofessional team
- The ability to appropriately use assertiveness
- The ability to problem solve and be flexible

LESSONS LEARNED

- There will be challenging moments and you will see and experience things that make you feel uncomfortable. This is where the most growth happens.
- I learned to appreciate the value of being present and to find value in every experience and interaction.
- The community knows what they need and are the experts of their own community.
- Community members value ongoing relationships beyond travel dates.



ADVICE

- Before traveling do research on the culture and customs of where you visiting. If possible speak to other students that have volunteered or travelled to the area before.
- Before traveling do some self reflecting about how your identity and experience with privilege and oppression in the U.S. may either change or affect you differently or similarly while abroad.
- While abroad take time to truly be present. Take in the experience, the people and their stories and the culture. This will be the most valuable thing you return home with.

